

the green twist tie

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Summary: Zane proposes to Rikki, but he doesn't have a ring. What else was he supposed to do?

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****Hope you enjoy!****

"Zane could you please turn down the music? It's driving me crazy!" shouted Lewis, causing a few costumers to jump. As was typical per a summer afternoon, Rikki's was filled to the brim with sweaty teens looking for a fruity cool down. As was not so typical, Lewis was in a bad mood.

The cause was one of Cleo and his very few but very intense fights that seemed to stretch on for weeks, when in reality the two couldn't stand to be without each other for more than a day. Lewis naturally had turned to the closest thing he had to a posy and boozing it up: Zane and a glass of wheat grass. Despite the incredible secret and the now four amazing girls holding them together, Zane and Lewis had never really passed the "I'll tolerate you if you tolerate me" phase in their relationship.

Despite all of this, the two had almost missed each other in a friendly sort of way, and Zane willingly turned down the music. He felt bad for the poor guy. He and Rikki fought a lot, and broke up nearly as much, but they were destructive people and always made it work in the end. Lewis however was not cut from the same cloth and Cleo even less so. He poured him another shot of wheat grass.

"I always thought that that was what she wanted you know? I mean I would risk my life for her, but she doesn't even love me enough to forgive one stupid mistake!" Lewis babbled, giving Zane a desperate wide eyed stare. Okay Zane really hadn't missed him that much.

"Why don't you just do what I do and ask her friends for help? Rikki

and Bella are bound to know something. Hell, Emma would probably know more about this than I do, and she's in Italy! Besides, your sorry state is scaring away my customers." Zane half joked, trying to make Lewis feel better enough that he left his juice shop and stop scaring the nearby teens. He was going to get some weird parental calls from this one.

Lewis perked up and the idea and his eyebrows got all scrunchy and thoughtful. "Huh. Maybe you're right. I just need to be more determined and ask the girlsâ€¦" he murmured half dazed as he stood up off of his stool. Luis steeled himself and waltzed proudly out the door. He was going to get back his woman!

Zane laughed then looked disdainfully at the empty counter and the lack of change left there. Luis really was a bit of a dolt sometimes. Oh well, he'd let it slide just this once for old times' sake. And he HAD kind of missed fighting with the nerd on occasion. Suddenly, a hand reached out of nowhere and jerked him into the backroom area. Startled, he started to fight back, but stopped when he saw it was Rikki with a worried look on her face. Immediately panic turned to concern, and he followed her into the freezer without a word.

"What is it love?" he asked, running his hands up and down her arms to keep her warm. She seemed to hesitate at his touch which was unusual considering they hadn't fought in a while, and when they did she preferred to hit him instead. Her eyes ran over the floor and his feet, as though she couldn't quite bring herself to look him in the eye.

"Rikki," He started, real concern seeping into his voice, "what's wrong? What's going on here? Do I need to get Cleo and Bella?" He was about to rub her arm again, but found that it was already warm and smoking a little. That was never a good sign.

She noticed him staring and waved him off. "Don't worry, it's not a mermaid problem, it's just my emotions going haywire." She turned her back to him, then faced him with her mouth open, shut it, and turned around again.

"I've been thinkingâ€¦ what with Lewis and Cleo fighting and allâ€¦ that maybeâ€¦ we need to talk." Zane's heart sank. He didn't like the sound of where this was headed. Around sixty percent of their breakups and fights started like this one, and nearly four years of hearing it repeatedly had trained him to know what was coming next.

"Hey," Zane defended, grabbing Rikki's arm and spinning her around to face him. "Just because Lewis proposed to Cleo and she said no because the stupid git lost her grandmother's ring does not mean that we have to do anything drastic now."

Rikki finally looked him in the eyes, her blue ones swarming with tears. Her lips twitched into a slim imitation of her glorious smile, reassuring him that all was not lost.

"Zane I'm not breaking up with you. Are you really that stupid?" She asked, almost laughing as a tear slipped out of her eye. He brushed it carefully away with his finger and wrapped his arms around her waist.

"Then why are you crying? Because Lewis and Cleo are idiots?" That earned him a smile and Rikki sniffed away the rest of her tears.

"No," she replied. "I'm crying because you haven't asked me." Well that was a new. Suddenly the dam broke and Rikki exploded.

"Will and Bella have been engaged for nearly a year now and have known each other half as long, Cleo will be within a few hours and Emma has a hot Italian boy begging her to marry him every five minutes. It's not that I feel out of the loop, it's just that I saw that ring in your bag a few months ago and I thoughtâ€¦ Well I thought maybe thatâ€¦"

"That it was for you." He finished quietly. She nodded, her tears long gone and embarrassment reigning supreme in her eyes.

"That was actually Cleo's ring. Luis asked me to hold onto it for a while so she wouldn't find it. Of course the second I gave it back he lost it, but still." Rikki nodded and forced a smile.

"So you weren't planning to propose then?" she asked, disappointed.

Zane smiled. He had actually been thinking of asking her, but decided to wait for the drama of Will and Bella to end before making his move. Unfortunately, Luis had been thinking the same thing, prompting him to forget his plans until further notice. But now that she brought it upâ€¦

"Well Rikki, to be quite honest I had. I'd just never bought a ring," he confessed. But since when had he done things the right way?

Thinking fast, he dropped on one knee and grabbed a green twisty tie out of his pocket. Rikki froze.

"Zaneâ€¦?" She watched as he twisted the small piece of paper covered wire into a ring and held it before her like it was made of diamonds.

"Rikki, I love you so very much. And I want you to know that when we get old and fat and wrinkly I will love you even more than I do today. Even if our first kid is a fish," she laughed and grabbed his hand, "and you want to name him Nemo, I will still love you more than ever before. So I have to ask with nothing more to offer than my heart and this twisty tie: Rikki Chadwick, will you marry me?"

She stared at him open mouthed and laughed at him, then slowly shook her head in disbelief.

"Yes! What to you bloody think I'm going to say!" She exclaimed, bending down to kiss him. Zane pushed the green tie onto her finger, then stood up and twirled her in his arms. When he set her down, she looked up at him and said with all seriousness, "you know, you're going to have to do this again when you buy me a real ring right?"

Zane feigned offence and gasped, "But I spent millions on that one!" Rikki smirked and held out her hand.

"Well then I guess it shall have to do," she replied, smiling into his lips.

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